14 August 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. George Cary
                 Legislative Counsel

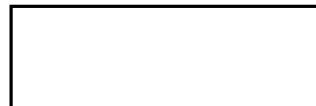SUBJECT   : Congressman Guyer's Query

     1. At the Foreign Affairs Committee breakfast
on 13 August, I happened to be seated next to Represen-
tative Tennyson Guyer (R. Ohio). As the breakfast was
breaking up, he asked if I happened to know or could
make an educated guess at the number of political prison-
ers currently held in the USSR by the Soviet Government.
My answer was that I did not know off the top of my head
but would try to find out for him.

     2. Attached is a note prepared by OCI at the
request of the Acting NIO for the USSR and Eastern Europe.
Would you please relay its substance to Congressman
Guyer.

     3. In discussing the Congressman's question, I
cautioned him on two points:

     First, though there were a spate of estimates
    on this score -- covering, in the aggregate, a
    fairly wide range -- no one outside the Soviet
    Union really knew since this was information
    the Soviet Government considered highly sensitive.

     Second, the answer would be significantly
    affected by how loosely or tightly one defined
    the term "political prisoner." Even the KGB's
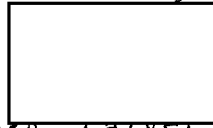   own books would be influenced by this defini-
    tional factor.

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4. In passing the attached information to the Congressman, please re-stress the above two caveats. If he wants a general figure that would proably be in the ballpark, you could say that there are "over a million" political prisoners in the Soviet Union. (You can actually say "well over a million.") Our 1.8 million guess cannot factor out the "common criminals" from this total; but the total, as indicated, does not include those who are actually political prisoners but are held and classed as "patients" in psychiatric hospitals. Hence, any estimate in the million range is legitimate and near the right ballpark.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

Attachment

O/D/DCI/NIO:GACarver/mee
Distribution
Orig - Addressee w/att
1 - A/NIO/USSR&EE w/att
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